



**State of Connecticut**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
STATE CAPITOL  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

**REPRESENTATIVE DAVID ALEXANDER**  
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**MEMBER**  
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Thank you Representative Guerrero, Senator Boucher, Representative O'Dea and the entire membership of the Transportation Committee for the opportunity to testify today. I am David Alexander, the State Representative for the 58th District of Enfield, and I am here today to testify ardently against HB 6818: An Act Concerning the Establishment of Electronic Tolls at the State's Tolls. This is an extremely important issue, but the legislation as currently written is overly simplistic and would cause great harm to the residents of Connecticut and to the state economy.

I totally understand why this legislation is being submitted. Connecticut has a serious revenue problem, and our state's transportation infrastructure is in disarray. We need to improve our state's transportation system in order to grow our economy, and we do need to raise revenue in order to do it. However, simply placing tolls on our state's border is not the answer. Border tolls would greatly degrade local zones of commerce on our borders. It would violate principles of fairness for residents who live on the border, and it would increase accidents while also increasing burdens placed upon our municipalities on the borders.

The economies within geographic areas do not abide by border lines between states. For instance, the economy in my hometown of Enfield is more "Western-Massachusetts centric" than one would think. Many of my residents work in Springfield, Massachusetts in many capacities. The MassMutual office in Springfield is a major employer for Enfield residents. Recently MassMutual purchased The Hartford's annuity section based out of Simsbury, and this caused many Enfield MassMutual employees to be relocated to Springfield. These residents travel only four to five miles a day to work, and under this legislation they would have to pay a toll if they travel to work on I-91. Conversely many Massachusetts residents work in Enfield for companies such as Lego, Hallmark and the MassMutual Enfield office. If the state charges a \$4 or \$5 toll than it would cost Connecticut residents \$750 to \$1000 just to travel to work on a yearly basis. This would clearly produce negative repercussions to our local "zone of commerce," and the same would be true for other communities on the border.

Border tolls also would violate simple rules of fairness for Connecticut residents. Why should an Enfield retired couple be required to pay a toll to travel four miles to have dinner at the same Springfield, Massachusetts restaurant that they have been dining at for years when a Rocky Hill resident could travel 10 miles without paying a toll? Many of my residents have family members that live only a few miles away in the Greater-Springfield area. I had an aunts and cousins that lived in Springfield for years. Why should my residents have to pay a toll in order to travel four to five miles to see their loved ones?



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Typically the response to these arguments is that people can use back-roads to travel, but border tolls would increase traffic on these back-roads to an unsustainable level. I will gladly take you to Route 5 at the Enfield/Longmeadow border at 5pm during a typical workday, and you will see major traffic gridlock. This traffic would greatly increase because drivers would use this route to avoid paying a border toll. Also, drivers will travel on RT. 159 from Suffield to Agawam, Massachusetts in order to avoid the border tolls. Traffic gridlock occurs on this road every September during the "Big E" festival, and that type of congestion would occur all year. This will increase accidents which is a serious public safety concern. Trying to raise revenue by placing tolls on our borders makes no sense if it increases accidents. Furthermore, the increased traffic would degrade local roads, and this would serve as yet again another unfunded mandate for our municipalities.

I do not have a solution to the problem, but I have a few ideas that could help. First, I am not totally against the idea of tolls; I am against tolls only on our borders. Let us consider implementing statewide tolls. To my knowledge no state in the Union has border tolls. States do have tolls to travel across certain bridges but not state border tolls. The MassPike to our north is a toll road, and it has tolls running across the whole Pike, not just on the borders. This makes for a fair, just and equitable situation for all travelers and placing tolls throughout the entire highway discourages people from leaving the highway briefly to avoid paying the toll.

Second, we should discuss the idea of exempting travelers from paying a toll if they travel only a small distance. For instance, we could exempt those who travel less than 10 miles. This would avoid the negative economic consequences that I spoke to, and it would not overburden the zones of commerce on our borders. This also would be fair, just and equitable for those who have family members just across the border in neighboring states. For many years most exits on the MassPike in Western Massachusetts were exempt so there is a precedent for this idea.

Third, before we move forward with any tolls we should conduct research to know exactly how much money we would raise. Let us examine travel patterns, the cost of toll implementation and toll facility maintenance. We cannot make an accurate decision about tolls until we understand how much revenue we would raise.

Finally, let me be clear. I am not against the idea of tolling, but I think it is overly simplistic to place tolls just on our borders. I understand that we have a revenue problem, and I understand that we have



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transportation infrastructure problems. But we need to have a mature and detailed conversation about tolls. Thank you. I will gladly answer any questions.

